

**WASHINGTON, DC**—Reps. Peter DeFazio (D-OR), Chairman of the Subcommittee on Highways and Transit, advocated for the comfort of the traveling public today when his legislation, H.R. 5788, the HANG UP Act (Halting Airplane Noise to Give Us Peace Act) passed out of the full House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure by voice vote.

“With airline customer satisfaction at an all time low, this is not the time to consider making airplane travel even more torturous. Polls show the public overwhelmingly doesn’t want to be subjected to people talking on their cell phones on increasingly over-packed airplanes,” DeFazio said. “However, with Internet access just around the corner on U.S. flights, it won’t be long before the ban on voice communications on in-flight planes is lifted. The HANG UP Act, would ensure that financially strapped airlines don’t drive us towards this noisome disruption in search of further revenue.”

The European Union recently announced that it will allow people to talk on their cell phones while a plane is in-flight on all commercial airlines. Additionally, U.S. airlines are already experimenting with in-flight Internet access. In-flight voice communication poses a potential revenue source for airlines both because they could charge passengers to sit in a non-talking section and charge people to use their phones. H.R. 5788 would insure that voice communication does not happen on U.S. flights.

In-flight voice use of cell phones is overwhelmingly opposed by consumers. Sixty-three percent of those responding to a poll sponsored by the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA and the National Consumers League were against it. Just 21% of people favored removing restrictions on using cell phones in flight. Aside from the obvious courtesy issues, flight attendants have safety concerns with in-flight voice communication. If voice communication is permitted, passengers are likely to not pay attention to safety announcements and flight attendants could be forced to referee disputes resulting from loud conversations.

The legislation only prohibits voice communications in-flight but passengers would still be able to access the Internet, e-mail and send text messages as these technologies become available on airplanes.

“The free market wasn’t adequate to regulate smoking on planes and it won’t be

sufficient to regulate cell phones either,&quot; DeFazio said. &quot;I am pleased that we are taking steps to stop this disruption before it becomes an issue for American consumers.&quot;

The legislation now heads to the full House of Representatives for consideration. Companion legislation was introduced as an amendment to the Federal Aviation Administration re-authorization in the Senate.